



# THOMAS HINMAN MOORER

2 July 1970 — 1 July 1974

Thomas Moorer was born in Mt. Willing, Alabama, on 9 February 1912. After he graduated as valedictorian from Cloverdale High School in nearby Montgomery in 1927, his interest in technology and a “natural attraction” to military service led Moorer to enter the US Naval Academy. He graduated in 1933. After completing training as an aviator at the Pensacola Naval Air Station in 1936, he flew with fighter squadrons based on the carriers *Langley*, *Lexington*, and *Enterprise*.

Lieutenant Moorer was serving with a patrol squadron at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, when the Japanese attacked in December 1941. His unit subsequently participated in the Dutch East Indies campaign of early 1942, during which he flew numerous combat missions. He received a Purple Heart after being shot down and wounded off the coast of Australia in February 1942 and then surviving an attack on the rescue ship, which was sunk the same day. Three months later, he braved Japanese air superiority to fly supplies into and evacuate wounded out of the island of Timor. For this action, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross for valor. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in October 1942.

In 1943 and 1944 Moorer commanded Bombing Squadron 132, which conducted anti-submarine warfare against the Germans off the coasts of Florida, Cuba, and North Africa. He was promoted to commander in April 1944, soon after becoming the gunnery and tactical officer on the staff of the Air Commander of the Atlantic Fleet.

**Admiral Thomas H. Moorer**  
United States Navy





Lieutenant (Junior Grade) Moorer, *third from left*, with his PBY crew, Ford Island, Hawaii, 1940.

After the war Moorer was assigned to the Strategic Bombing Survey in Japan. Before his promotion to captain in January 1952, his assignments included serving as Project Officer for the development of the Sidewinder missile and in air operations at sea. After graduating from the Naval War College in 1953, he served on the staff of the Air Commander of the Atlantic Fleet and then as Aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air.

In 1956 he assumed command of his first ship, the USS *Salisbury Sound* (AV-13), a seaplane tender that sailed extensively in the Far East.

Captain Moorer joined the Navy Staff as a strategic planner in 1957. In 1958 he became Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for War Gaming Matters and was promoted to rear admiral. After a year at sea in command of Carrier Division SIX, Moorer returned to the Navy Staff in 1960 to direct the Long Range



Admiral Moorer, Commander in Chief, Atlantic, greets Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey at the US Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Virginia, June 1965.

Objectives Group. In 1962 he was promoted to vice admiral and assumed command of the Seventh Fleet.

In June 1964 Moorer received his fourth star and became Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet. Two months after he assumed command, the United States became involved in a war in Vietnam. In August the destroyer USS *Maddox* was attacked while on patrol in the Tonkin Gulf off the coast of Vietnam, and Pacific Fleet planes took part in a retaliatory strike against North Vietnam. Admiral

Moorer left the Pacific Fleet on 30 March 1965, just two weeks after its air forces joined in ROLLING THUNDER, the US air campaign against North Vietnam. He remarked that he felt “like a fire chief that leaves a roaring fire just when he gets the hoses hooked up and is ready to turn on the water.”

On 30 April 1965 Moorer assumed command of NATO’s Allied Command, Atlantic; the US Atlantic Command; and the Atlantic Fleet. He was the only officer in the Navy’s history to command both the Pacific and



Admiral Moorer in South Vietnam, August 1969.

Atlantic Fleets. As CINCLANT, Moorer successfully concluded the US operation in the Dominican Republic. As Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, he initiated a major revision in NATO maritime strategy, developing the concept of a standing naval force for the Allied Command, Atlantic.

On 1 August 1967 Admiral Moorer became Chief of Naval Operations. For the

next three years he guided the Navy during the height of the Vietnam War, a period characterized by growing antipathy at home toward US military involvement in Southeast Asia and the beginning of Soviet naval challenges to US maritime dominance. Moorer marshalled available resources to counter the expansion of large Soviet task forces into the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Indian

Ocean. Despite fiscal constraints and the needs of the Vietnam War, he was particularly successful in modernizing US submarines to assure their continued technical superiority.

On 2 July 1970 Admiral Moorer became the seventh Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was the first naval officer to hold the post since Admiral Radford. As Chairman, Moorer often found his and the Chiefs' advice disregarded by the President and the Secretary of Defense. Nevertheless, he believed that the Chairman's position was sufficiently strong and that the joint system worked well; he saw no need to revamp JCS organization. According to Moorer, personalities, not organization charts, made all the difference.

In December 1971 the Secretary of Defense revised the World-Wide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS), the systems and procedures that linked the President and the field commanders. The chain for communicating commands continued to run from the President to the Secretary of Defense through the Joint Chiefs to the unified and specified commanders. For emergency and crisis situations, however, the Secretary specified a shortened chain through the Chairman representing the Chiefs. This change merely reflected the existing situation. In many Vietnam actions during his first eighteen months in office, Admiral Moorer had dealt directly with field commanders on operational issues. During the September 1970 Middle East crisis in which the regime of Jordan's pro-Western King Hussein was threatened, Moorer had acted for the Chiefs because time was critical and had informed them later.

When Moorer took office, the process of Vietnamization, whereby the Vietnamese assumed progressively greater responsibility for combat operations and US forces withdrew, had been under way for over a year. Although he and the Chiefs accepted the con-

cept of Vietnamization, they disagreed with the President and top civilian advisers over the pace of the US withdrawals. The Joint Chiefs favored smaller and slower US reductions to allow the South Vietnamese more time to adjust to their expanding combat role.

Moorer was particularly perturbed over the rules of engagement in Southeast Asia and the restraints placed on US military action there. He repeatedly recommended the mining of Haiphong harbor and heavy bombing around the Hanoi area. He and the Chiefs believed that increased naval and air pressure on North Vietnam would lead to a peace settlement, but their advice was rejected and US forces withdrew at a rate that the Joint Chiefs deemed "too much too soon." From nearly 415,000 troops in South Vietnam in 1970, troop strength declined to 25,000 by the end of 1972. In late 1972, President Richard Nixon directed naval and air bombardment of previously prohibited targets in the Hanoi and Haiphong area, and on 27 January 1973 the North Vietnamese agreed to an accord. Moorer felt vindicated, since the military measures that he had long advocated had worked.

As JCS representative in the various NSC committees, Moorer was deeply involved in the strategic arms limitation talks (SALT). In May 1972 President Nixon went to Moscow for the final and climactic round of SALT. The afternoon and evening of 25 May witnessed tense exchanges of messages as the President sought JCS acceptance of the final terms negotiated in Moscow. Moorer recommended rejecting them to make the Soviets give more ground, but Nixon pressed strongly for JCS concurrence. Moorer then presided over a hastily arranged JCS conference from which a statement of their "accord" with the agreement finally emerged. Afterward, Moorer joked that he had gone through the entire dictionary to find this acceptable word.

Admiral Moorer also was concerned about declining conventional force levels. He saw force recommendations by the Joint Chiefs reduced by the President and then again by Congress and worried that conventional capabilities were being cut below the danger point. Repeatedly, during high-level meetings he warned that an essential element in any strategic equation was the communist threat, which was real and rising, and that the United States should enhance its ability to respond conventionally to that threat.

In October 1973, when Egypt and Syria attacked Israeli forces in occupied territory that Israel had won from them during the 1967 Six Day War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff supervised a large airlift of arms to Israel directed by President Nixon. Admiral Moorer

worried about whether the Arabs would turn to the Soviet Union and thereby imperil US access to Middle East oil. In fact, Israel won such successes against Egypt that the Soviet Union did threaten to intervene. At a midnight meeting in the White House, Moorer said bluntly that the Middle East would be the worst place to fight a war with the Soviet Union. He supported the administration's decisions, however, to deter Moscow by ordering a worldwide alert, stopping Israel's advance, and then restoring ties with the Arab states.

Admiral Moorer retired as Chairman on 1 July 1974. In retirement, he served as a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, and on several corporate boards.

# Thomas Hinman Moorer

Admiral, USN

## Promotions

## Dates

Temporary

Permanent

ENS. . . . .	01 Jun 33
LTJG . . . . .	01 Jun 36
LT. . . . .	23 Nov 40
LCDR . . . . .	01 Oct 42
CDR . . . . .	27 Apr 44
CAPT. . . . .	01 Jan 52
RADM . . . . .	01 Aug 58
VADM . . . . .	05 Oct 62
ADM . . . . .	26 Jun 64

## Assignments

## Dates

From

To

USS <i>Salt Lake City</i> . . . . .	1933 . . . . .	1933
Navy Yard, New York, NY; CFO USS <i>New Orleans</i> . . . . .	1933 . . . . .	1935
Student, Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL. . . . .	1935 . . . . .	1936
Fighter Squadron ONE-B . . . . .	1936 . . . . .	1937
Fighter Squadron SIX . . . . .	1937 . . . . .	1939
Patrol Squadron 22. . . . .	1939 . . . . .	1942
Patrol Squadron 101 . . . . .	1942 . . . . .	1942
Transition Training Squadron, Atlantic Fleet . . . . .	1942 . . . . .	1943
Commanding Officer, Bombing Squadron 132 . . . . .	1943 . . . . .	1944
Gunnery and Tactical Officer, Staff, Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet . . . . .	1944 . . . . .	1945
Member of Strategic Bombing Survey (Japan), Staff, Office of Chief of Naval Operations. . . . .	1945 . . . . .	1946
Executive Officer, Naval Aviation Ordnance Test Station, Chincoteague, VA . . . . .	1946 . . . . .	1948
Operations Officer, USS <i>Midway</i> . . . . .	1948 . . . . .	1949
Operations Officer, Carrier Division FOUR. . . . .	1949 . . . . .	1950
Experimental Officer, Naval Ordnance Test Station, Inyokern, CA . . . . .	1950 . . . . .	1951
Student, Naval War College, Newport, RI . . . . .	1952 . . . . .	1953
Plans Officer, Staff, Commander Air Force, Atlantic Fleet . . . . .	1953 . . . . .	1955
Aide to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air,		



Washington, DC . . . . .	1955 . . . . .	1956
<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Dates</b>	
	From	To
Commanding Officer, USS <i>Salisbury Sound</i> . . . . .	1956 . . . . .	1957
Assistant Director, Strategic Plans Division, Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC . . . . .	1957 . . . . .	1958
Joint Operations Analysis Group, Washington, DC . . . . .	1958 . . . . .	1958
Assistant Chief of Naval Operations (War Gaming Matters), Washington, DC . . . . .	1958 . . . . .	1959
Commander, Carrier Division SIX . . . . .	1959 . . . . .	1960
Director, Long Range Objectives Group, Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC . . . . .	1960 . . . . .	1962
Commander, SEVENTH Fleet . . . . .	1962 . . . . .	1964
Commander in Chief, US Pacific Fleet. . . . .	1964 . . . . .	1965
Commander in Chief, Atlantic and Atlantic Fleet and Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic . . . . .	1965 . . . . .	1967
Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, DC . . . . .	1967 . . . . .	1970
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC. . . . .	1970 . . . . .	1974

## Principal US Military Decorations

Defense Distinguished Service Medal (with oak leaf cluster)  
 Navy Distinguished Service Medal (with 4 gold stars)  
 Army Distinguished Service Medal  
 Air Force Distinguished Service Medal  
 Silver Star  
 Legion of Merit  
 Distinguished Flying Cross  
 Purple Heart